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STEAM TO AUSTRALIA,

ITS GENERAL ADVANTAGES CONSIDERED;

THE DIFFERENT PROPOSED

R O U T E S

FOR CONNECTING

m. LONDON AND SYDNEY

COMPARED;

AND THE EXPEDIENCY OF

FORMING A SETTLEMENT

AT

CAPE YORK, IN TORRES STRAIT,

POINTED OUT IN

A LETTER

TO THE RIGHT HONORABLE EARL GREY,

SECRETARY OF STATE FOR THE COLONIES.

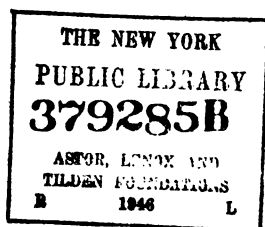
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TO THE

RIGHT HONORABLE EARL GREY,

SECRETARY OF STATE FOR THE COLONIES.

MY LORD,

Ms. 92. Aug. 16, 1946 I take the liberty of addressing you on subjects which concern the paramount interests of the British Empire, as well as those of the Australian Colonies : not the particular interests of individuals.

That which will redound to the immortal honour of Great Britain, will tend materially to strengthen and consolidate her power, will treble the wealth and develop the already great resources of Australia ; and will at the same time be of incredible benefit to the whole family of man, cannot but be interesting to a patriotic minister of the Crown, I therefore make no apology for addressing your Lordship on such important topics. In the following pages will be considered, first, steam communication with Australia and the different proposed routes.

Then the expediency of forming a settlement at Cape York, in Torres Strait.

The first subject has been agitated to a considerable extent in England, by those interested in this portion of Her Majesty's dominions. It has also received a

share of your Lordship's attention, and I understand you only wait the result of colonial opinion, as to the best route, and of the trial voyage of a vessel propelled by the auxiliary screw, which is now about to leave London for Sydney, by the Cape of Good Hope, before deciding which line Government will adopt.

At this particular juncture of the question, a pamphlet written by a colonist, and which expresses the opinions and views taken of the matter by the majority of the thinking portion of the inhabitants of New South Wales, may not be totally unacceptable to your Lordship. The latter portion of this paper is devoted to a subject, which, although intimately connected with the first, has not occupied much attention either here or in the Mother Country ; but I think the present a good opportunity of bringing it before the Imperial Government and the public.

It can scarcely be said that the writer of these pages is entirely incompetent to speak of the questions therein considered, or that his experience is inadequate to the task he has imposed on himself. Surely, my Lord, some weight may be attached to the opinions of an individual in colonial affairs, who has resided eight years in the different settlements of Australia ; and those years spent in the various pursuits which attend the founding of new countries. Surely some weight, in matters of commerce, may attach to the opinions of a merchant of this City, extensively engaged in the trade with China, Manila, and India, as well as with the Parent Country. Neither can it be said that the writer is ignorant of nautical affairs : his early years

were spent in the naval service of the East India Company, on those seas described in this pamphlet.

Last year he visited China, and during that voyage he paid particular attention to the question which had been mooted of extending steam navigation from Singapore to Sydney, having passed through Torres Strait; and having circumnavigated New Holland, he is not entirely unacquainted with the nature of the localities, seas, and winds, regarding which he has taken the liberty to address your Lordship.

With these remarks I shall at once proceed to the task.

Of the advantages of Steam Communication with Australia generally.

When we take into consideration the many conflicting advocations of schemes to be adopted by the different parties in England interested in the various Australian Settlements, each jealous that the route chosen by the Government may not be that one, which would serve the interests of the particular Colony in which they have a stake, and may not therefore serve their own. When we consider the ignorance that still prevails in the Parent Country, even among those who have given the matter their serious attention, of the nature of the seas to be traversed by this proposed line of steam ships, the winds that prevail, the expenses incurred by the formation of coal depôts, and various other details attending the establishment of this communication, which can only be known to those well acquainted with the Colonies, and the seas which wash the shores of this vast Island Continent,

When we also bear in mind the opposite views of this question taken by the Legislatures of some of the other Australian Colonies, which could easily be shown, have been expressed, not so much in consideration of the general good of Australia or the Empire at large, as for the more confined idea of benefiting their own particular localities, we cannot but appreciate the wisdom displayed by your Lordship in withholding your decision till more authentic information is afforded—that information must come from the colonists themselves, and it is with this view that I have taken up my pen on the present occasion, to express, as far as I think I am justified, the opinions of the people of New South Wales: that by so doing it may be shown that the inhabitants are by no means indifferent to the general advantages attending this establishment.

In considering the wishes of the different Colonies on this subject, and before deciding finally as to which route Government will adopt, your Lordship will no doubt be influenced in a great measure by the wishes of that Colony, which is older, of greater extent, more densely peopled, wealthier, and of greater importance in every respect to Great Britain than any of the other settlements in this quarter of the globe, and in which is situated the metropolis and chief seat of Government.

It must be deemed wise that your Lordship should pause before hastily adopting a route, which might turn out to be not the best, or giving Government

assistance to a Company got up in ignorance of the difficulties to be overcome: which might not be able to carry out the objects for which it had been formed, and for which it had received the public money. This, my Lord, would entail a useless waste of capital, and would by no means serve the Australian Colonies.

It is the desire of the Colonists that that route should be fixed upon which is for the present most feasible, which would entail least expense, which can be brought into immediate operation, and which it can be pointed out, may be established without any chimerical results, and with certainty as to success.

It is this certainty which would command a preference in New South Wales, over the other schemes, which might perhaps have apparently greater advantages, but less assurance of success. It is by no means the wish of the people of this Colony, to induce the reckless embarkation of British capital in a gigantic undertaking, without some prospect of profit; and it is for this reason that I will hereafter draw your Lordship's special attention to that route, as being the most eligible,—the one recommended by that indefatigable gentleman, Lieutenant Waghorn, from Singapore, by Torres Strait.

I think it needless here to discuss, at any length, the paramount importance of connecting by steam navigation the distant Provinces of the empire with the seat of Government.

The ancient Romans seem to have been well aware of the value of rapid intelligence in maintaining the supremacy of the Empire, for we find that during the

happy age of the Antonines, when Rome had reached the very acme of her power and greatness, and at a period when the limits of her sway were only bounded by the desert and the ocean, the Emperors were particularly alive to keeping up a line of quick communication with the most remote provinces.

On this point, Mr. Gibbon, in his history of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire (2nd chapter), after speaking of the Roman cities, says,—

“ All these cities were connected with each other, and with the capital, by the public highways, which issuing from the forum of Rome, traversed Italy, pervaded the provinces, and were terminated only by the frontiers of the Empire. If we carefully trace the distance from the wall of Antoninus to Rome, and from thence to Jerusalem, it will be found that the great chain of communication, from the North-west to the South-east point of the Empire, was drawn out to the length of 4080 Roman or 3740 English miles. The public roads were accurately divided by mile-stones, and ran in a direct line from one city to another, with very little respect for the obstacles either of nature or private party.

“ Mountains were perforated, and bold arches thrown over the broadest and most rapid streams. The middle part of the road was raised into a terrace which commanded the adjacent country, consisted of several strata of sand, gravel, and cement, and was paved with large stones, or in some places, near the capital, with granite. Such was the solid construction of the Roman highways, whose firmness has not entirely

yielded to the effort of fifteen centuries. They united the subjects of the most distant provinces by an easy and familiar intercourse: but their primary object had been to facilitate the marches of the legions. Nor was any country considered as completely subdued, till it had been rendered in all its parts, pervious to the arms and authority of the conqueror. The advantage of receiving the earliest intelligence, and of conveying their orders with celerity, induced the Emperors to establish, throughout their extensive dominions, the regular institution of posts. Houses were everywhere erected at the distance only of five or six miles; each of them was constantly provided with forty horses, and by the help of these relays it was easy to travel an hundred miles in a day along the Roman roads. The use of the posts was allowed to those who claimed it by an imperial mandate; but although originally intended for the public service, it was sometimes indulged to the business or convenience of private citizens. Nor was the communication of the Roman Empire less free and open by sea than it was by land. The provinces surrounded and enclosed the Mediterranean; and Italy, in the shape of an immense promontory, advanced into the midst of that great lake.

“The coasts of Italy are, in general, destitute of safe harbours, but human industry had corrected the deficiencies of nature, and the artificial port of Ostia, in particular, situated at the mouth of the Tyber, and formed by the Emperor Claudius, was an useful monument of Roman greatness. From this port, which

was only sixteen miles from the capital, a favourable breeze frequently carried vessels in seven days to the Columns of Hercules, and in nine or ten to Alexandria in Egypt."

To show the rapidity at which the officers of the Roman government travelled, Mr. Gibbon says, in a note taken from the orations of Libanius, that:—
 "In the time of Theodosius Cæsarius, a magistrate of high rank went by post from Antioch to Constantinople; he began his journey at night, was in Cappadocia (165 miles from Antioch) the ensuing evening, and arrived at Constantinople the sixth day about noon. The whole distance was 665 English miles."

Another note in Milman's edition of Gibbon tells us that—"Posts for the conveyance of intelligence were established by Augustus." (Suet. Aug. 49.) "The couriers travelled with amazing speed." (Blair on Roman Slavery.) "It is probable that posts from the time of Augustus were confined to the public service, and supplied by impressment. Nerva, as it appears from a coin of his reign, made an important change; he established posts upon all the public roads of Italy, and made the service chargeable upon his own exchequer." * * "Hadrian perceiving the advantage of improvement extended them to all the provinces of the empire." Cardwell on Coins, p. 220.

What a good road and chain of posts from Britain to Jerusalem was to the Roman Emperors, so will steam navigation from London to Sydney be to the Imperial Government. If it has been shewn how

much these posts conduced to the prosperity and power of Rome, it might not be impossible to trace among the chief causes which led to the decline and ruin of her empire, the allowing the means by which intelligence was conveyed rapidly to fall into decay, and it is not unreasonable to infer that if Rome had had the advantage of steam navigation she still would have been the mistress of the world.

The further extension of this navigation seems to be the only link wanting to consolidate British power and supremacy over the world—to bind, as it were, by an adamant chain the remote appendages in one interest, that of affection and loyalty to the Parent State,—to throw a bridge over the seas from London to the antipodes,—to diffuse the glad tidings of Christianity among the savage inhabitants of the Indian Archipelago and the Isles of the Pacific,—to infuse the life-blood of civilization, of liberty, of intellect, of the arts and sciences, of Anglo-Saxon enterprise, and indefatigable perseverance, warm from the heart of the imperial Metropolis, to the frontiers of British dominion—to the most distant quarters of the globe—through the vein of Steam navigation to Australia.

These, my Lord, are a few of the results which will flow from carrying this magnificent scheme into immediate execution. The project is worthy the attention of a great statesman—of the high position of England's Colonial Minister. It is perfectly feasible, easily put into operation, certain to be attended with success, and with incalculable benefit to nearly the whole human family. It is for England to lead the

way. It is for your Lordship to grant this great boon to the world,—to put the machinery into immediate motion which will achieve this great undertaking, the glorious results of which will redound to your immortal honour.

When I speak of Australia, I would have your Lordship to understand, that I include all British Settlements in this quarter of the globe ; and, surely, it can never be urged that she is premature in her demand for Steam communication.

At the present day, her European population amounts to 320,000 souls, who belong to the different Colonies in the following proportions, viz. :—

New South Wales.....	200,000
Van Diemen's Land.....	70,000
South Australia.....	30,000
New Zealand	15,000
Western Australia.....	5,000

320,000

These inhabitants consume, it has been estimated on an average taken from official documents, from £7 10s. to £10 per head per annum of British goods. If we take it at the minimum rate of £7 10s., we find that Australia consumes British commodities to the amount of £2,400,000.

The total value of the exports to Great Britain may be safely set down at about the same amount.

I believe these statements of the population, of exports and imports, are by no means exaggerated. I should say they are rather under than overrated.

The exports of the Colony of New South Wales, including Port Phillip, to London, during the year 1847, on the most moderate calculation, amounted to £1,500,000, of which sum the value of the clip of wool, which amounts to 20,000,000 lbs., worth in the Colony £1,100,000, forms the chief portion.

To give your Lordship an idea of the rising importance, and the high position held by Sydney as a commercial City, compared with the other ports of Australia, I shall make the following statements of exports to Great Britain during the years 1846 and 1847:—

SPECIFICATION OF EXPORTS

FROM SYDNEY, NEW SOUTH WALES, TO THE UNITED KINGDOM, COMMENCING
1ST NOVEMBER, 1845, AND ENDING 31ST OCTOBER, 1846.

By 41 Vessels, measuring 16,430 tons register.

39,349	Bales wool, weighing 10,397,421 lbs.	£606,500	0	0
1,240	Tuns sperm oil	87,000	0	0
428	Tuns black oil	6,000	0	0
3,700	Casks tallow, weighing 1,040½ tons	31,200	0	0
71½	Tons whalebone	9,300	0	0
45,973	Hides, weighing 1,124 tons	23,000	0	0
146,900	Horns	20,000	0	0
110,888	Hoofs			
295	Tons bones and bone dust			
41	Tons bark			
75,700	Treenails			
5,512	Sheep skins			
455	Calf skins			
21	Pig skins			
27	Goat skins			
29	Bundles sheep skins			
Sundries, being the produce of New South Wales, New Zealand, Van Diemen's Land, South Australia, and Foreign		100,000	0	0
		<hr/> £883,000 0 0 <hr/>		

SPECIFICATION OF EXPORTS

FROM SYDNEY, NEW SOUTH WALES, TO THE UNITED KINGDOM, COMMENCING
1ST NOVEMBER, 1846, AND ENDING 31ST OCTOBER, 1847.

By 48 Vessels, measuring 19,230 tons register.

42,625	Bales wool, weighing 11,727,085 lbs.....	£684,000	0	0
1,438	Tuns sperm oil	100,500	0	0
438	Tuns black oil.....	6,500	0	0
8,099	Casks tallow, weighing 2,383½ tons.....	80,000	0	0
38½	Tons whalebone.....	5,000	0	0
62,219	Hides, weighing 1,561½ tons.....	31,000	0	0
77,832	Horns	20,000	0	0
88,090	Hoofs			
288	Tons bones and bone dust			
2	Tons bark.....			
74,730	Treenails			
3,250	Sheep skins			
29	Goat skins			
1	Case goat skins			
1	Case hog skins	150,000	0	0
Sundries, being the produce of New South Wales, New Zealand, Van Diemen's Land, South Australia, and Foreign				
		£1,077,000	0	0

By these statements, which are taken from the Custom-house documents, your Lordship will observe the increasing traffic of the port with the Mother Country. That only 41 ships were required to carry the produce of 1846, but in 1847, 48 ships were loaded, being an additional 2800 tons of shipping: that the exports of the latter year exceeded in value the former by nearly £200,000: and that the total value of exports of Sydney alone are nearly one-half of the total amount of exports of Australia to Great Britain.

I have made these observations on this point so far, that your Lordship should be satisfied that among the conflicting opinions which prevail in the other Colonies

respecting this great question of steam navigation, the opinions and wishes of the people of New South Wales, and more especially of this flourishing city, should carry that weight which is proportionate to the importance of the Colony.

No less than six different routes have been proposed by which Steam communication with Sydney may be effected. Each route has had its strenuous advocates—actuated in their motives, no doubt, by the particular Colony they may be interested in. Whether it be the Cape Colony, the Mauritius, the Swan River settlement, South Australia, New South Wales, Van Diemen's Land, or New Zealand, I do not observe in the discussions which have taken place, or in the correspondence with your Lordship on the subject since it was first mooted, anything like a disinterested or unprejudiced view of the matter.

I shall now examine the merits, as briefly as possible, of the different proposed routes, in the following order :—

- 1st. *The Route by the Isthmus of Panama, across the Pacific, and touching at New Zealand.*
- 2nd. *The Route by the Cape of Good Hope, Swan River, and South Australia.*
- 3rd. *The Route from Ceylon, by the Cocos or Keelings, and Swan River.*
- 4th. *The Route by Singapore, Sunda Straits, the Cocos, and Swan River.*
- 5th. *The Route from Singapore by Torres Strait to Sydney, and returning by Cape Lexin, or the Western Passage, &c., &c., &c.*

6th. *The Route by Singapore and Torres Strait.*

1. Of the Route by the Isthmus of Panama, across the Pacific, and touching at New Zealand.

It has been urged by those, no doubt interested in the commerce of the west coast of America and the Pacific, that the route by the Isthmus of Panama would be a good one to adopt. It has been said in favour of this plan, that the distance is about 13,000 miles, that 5,000 miles of this distance is already navigated, namely—to the eastern shore of the Isthmus by the steam-ships of the West India Mail Packet Company. That it is in contemplation to cut a canal through that narrow neck of land which connects the Continent of North and South America; but before this gigantic achievement is completed, it is proposed that a line of steamers should start periodically from Panama on the western shore for Port Jackson, touching at some of the Islands in the Pacific to coal, and also calling at New Zealand.

The time occupied in performing this distance, with stoppages, would not be on a favourable calculation under 70 days.

The groups of Islands which lie near a line drawn from Panama to Sydney, are the Galapagos, the Marquesas, the Society and Friendly Islands.

Speaking of the first mentioned of these groups, Captain Philip P. King, R.N., says—"That the shipment of coal would be very inconvenient from them."

The next mentioned Islands have been abandoned by the French from their utter barrenness, although the Society Islands are now in the possession of that Nation.

True, one advantage would accrue from this plan, in placing England in quick communication with the promising new settlements in New Zealand; although this might be obtained equally well by the Indian route.

But I would ask what great benefit to Britain, or to Australia, would arise from a rapid communication with the inhospitable shores of the Marquesas, or even with the more fertile French plantations in Tahiti?

This line would convey quick intelligence to the numerous republics on the West coast of America, with which an extensive commerce is carried on by England. But we have yet to learn on what principles the Imperial Government would be induced to adopt a line passing nearly its entire length through Foreign States, and over the wide expanse of the Pacific, in the midst of which a depôt for coal might with difficulty be found on some insignificant isle, peopled by savages, under the control of a foreign European power; in preference to a route of which each stage would be within the limits of the British empire.

And if we take into consideration, that if it were even feasible to establish a depôt in the centre of the ocean, the enormous expense of transporting fuel, either from New South Wales, or from the Mother Country to that distant spot, and to the starting point on the west coast of America, would of itself be an insuperable objection to this route.

A few large ships in ballast leave this port during

the course of every year for Valparaiso. High freights would be given to induce those vessels to diverge from their direct track, and go so far North as the Society Groupe, the Marquesas, or Panama, to supply the depôts with coal. Indeed the N. E. trade wind would be, part of the way, directly opposed to their doing so.

Captain Philip Parker King, R.N., the distinguished Naval Surveyor and Hydrographer, in his evidence last year before the Select Committee of the Legislative Assembly of this Colony, appointed "*to take into consideration the best means of establishing a steam communication between this Colony and England, with instructions to take evidence and report,*" speaking of this route, says :—

"From Panama to Sydney, or the '*Eastern line,*' the distance *via* Auckland and Valparaiso and Panama is 9,450 miles, Sydney to Valparaiso being 6,900 miles ; but by proceeding in a more direct course, calling at Tahiti and passing the Galapago Islands, it would be 8,500 miles. The *Western line* from Sydney to the Mauritius (to meet the projected line *via* the Cape of Good Hope) is 5,500 miles.

"The '*Northern line*' therefrom being less than half the distance of the '*Eastern line,*' and 1,300 miles less than the '*Western line,*' must be the least expensive one."

Captain King continues—

"With respect to the time that would be occupied on the different routes, much would depend on the arrangements for meeting the China steamer at Singa-

pore ; but, as the line from England to Singapore is almost a direct course, whilst that by the Cape is a circuitous one, and by Panama, although very direct, longer by about 2,400 miles (58 deg. of longitude), there can be no doubt that the proposed one (*via* Singapore and Torres Straits) is the shortest, and would therefore be performed in less time. I believe that the steamers from England reach Singapore in forty-one days, to which, if twenty-seven days be added, the whole passage to Sydney may be estimated at under seventy days.

In another place, he says, speaking of the Panama and Cape lines : “ In both these lines, however, the supplying of coals to the depôts would be attended with difficulty, as vessels would have to be freighted *on purpose*, which, in most cases at least, would not occur on the ‘ *Northern line*.’ ”

I think enough has been said of this line to satisfy your Lordship that it is not the one Government should encourage.

2. Of the Route by the Cape of Good Hope, Swan River, and South Australia.

The next route for consideration, by which to connect England and Australia with Steam, is the one by the Cape of Good Hope, the Mauritius, Swan River, and South Australia.

A plan has been proposed by Mr. C. D. Hayes, in a pamphlet published by him, to carry this into effect, by means of a line of vessels to be propelled by the auxiliary screw, of large tonnage, and small steam power.

This project, it is understood, has received your Lordship's attention, and encouragement to some extent, insomuch that the gentlemen with whom Mr. Hayes seems to be connected, by our last advices from London, are about to despatch the *Sarah Sands*, or some other large vessel of her description, measuring 1200 tons and 150 horse power. This vessel is to be sent out on a trial voyage to Sydney, and is to receive some assistance from the Government in the shape of carrying emigrants and postages on all letters she may take.

There can be no doubt that this route has many advantages over the one already mentioned: that it would be of the first importance to Great Britain, and to all those countries which lie in the direct line, that this plan be carried into effect, they are all British possessions, and it may be inferred that this project will be advocated strongly by many influential men in England, who are interested in the colonies, which lie on this line, and their views will be supported by the Cape colony, the Mauritius, and some of our Australian settlements; but your Lordship will bear in mind that this question hinges upon rapid communication with the metropolis of the south-eastern hemisphere, the chief seat of Government of Australia, and with the principal nucleus of wealth and commerce, in this quarter of the globe, not upon direct advantages to other localities which should be viewed as merely collateral.

It has been argued with considerable truth and force that this route would place England in an inde-

pendent position with respect to quick communication with her Indian possessions—that Egypt may be shut against us at any time—that all our troops are sent to India by the Cape, and that this line may be extended from that quarter, and thereby place the Government in a position to throw large bodies of soldiers, on an emergency, into our Eastern dominions, and that with greater rapidity than the slow method at present followed of sending them by sailing vessels. And it has also been urged that the mortality which takes place under the present transport system would be materially lessened by the diminished period of the voyage—that the expense incurred by the British Government, from mortality among troops on board of transport ships to India, is great, and that this question of itself is worth attention.

It surely could not be expected that a Company, formed to carry this scheme into operation, could at any time place a sufficient number of steam-ships at the service of the Government, so as to enable them, on an emergency, to throw a large body of troops into any of our possessions which lie on this route.

Neither can it be said that mortality prevails among troops on board transport ships to that extent as to make it a matter of importance.

But although the advantages attending this plan are great, I cannot but conclude, that the difficulties and expenses which will result from its adoption will be greater—they will be such that, at least for the present, this will not be the route your Lordship will fix upon; whilst it can be shown that for the time

being it is not the most feasible, however apparent the advantages may be.

It is no part of my intention in these pages to throw cold water on this scheme ; but, surely, it is not only the duty, but the interest, of the Australians, and those connected with them in England, and of every honest man, to put the Minister in possession of such information, as would enable him to discourage the embarkation of money in an undertaking, when the result would be failure.

In the first place, I look upon the first cost of this undertaking as a serious impediment to success. It would require at least 8 vessels to do the work. A ship of 1200 tons and 150 horse-power, with the auxiliary screw-propeller, would cost from £30,000 to £36,000. We will assume that 8 of these ships would cost, ready for sea, £264,000, and that £36,000 would be necessary for establishing depôts on the line, transporting fuel to those depôts, and incidental expenses. There would be required a paid up capital to begin with of at least £300,000. Now it has been estimated that four steamers, of 500 tons and 200 horse-power, would be sufficient to keep up a monthly communication between Singapore and Sydney *via* Torres Strait, and the first cost of these vessels would only amount to £90,000.

It may be asked, are the present profits of capital invested in shipping, employed between the Mother Country and these Colonies, so large, that there is room for the advantageous employment of an additional 9600 tons ? Shipowners in the trade know to the contrary.

On what grounds, therefore, of prosperity, or magnitude of the English and Australian traffic, would the immediate expenditure of such a large sum as £300,000 be justified? Would the people of New South Wales? would any man honestly recommend such an extravagant scheme? They would not, knowing well that it would be followed by disappointment and loss to those most interested.

It is, that the line by Singapore would be attended, they are assured, by certain good results, and that the first outlay would be so trifling in comparison, that they would not recommend your Lordship to choose this one, the failure of which would eventually militate against the true interests of Australia.

But even supposing that by means of an extravagant annual grant from the Imperial Government, a company could be formed, and induced to carry into execution this gigantic project. A commencement being made, we will assume that the first vessel leaves London on the 1st of April, and that in a few days she gets into the north-east trade winds, which will waft her without starting tack or sheet till within a few degrees of the equator; lighting her fires she will steam against the south-east trade wind, in a direct line for the Cape of Good Hope, which place she will reach in due course. She will then steer about due east for Swan River, along any of the parallels which lie between 34° and 40° south.

The winds, my Lord, in these latitudes blow invariably from the westward, tempestuously, and that more especially during the winter months, from April till September.

She will experience no difficulty during this period of her voyage: spreading her canvas to the favouring gale, she may extinguish her fires, and husband her fuel. The revolutions of the screw will not accelerate her progress, for her maximum speed will be attained by the force of the winds alone, and this she may calculate on, with perhaps a few days excepted, till the port of her destination has been gained. Having touched at Swan River and Adelaide, we will suppose she has reached Sydney on or about the 10th day of June, and that she has started on her return to England, *via* the Cape of Good Hope, about the beginning of July.

It is the middle of winter, and I have already stated that the winds blow in strong gales from the westward, and more especially between the parallels 30° and 45° south latitude. If there is any part of the whole Southern Ocean more boisterous than another, it is that which lies between Sydney and Cape Leeuwin. This is notoriously the case in winter. So furiously does the western tempest blow, and that without intermission; so mountainously high do the seas run, which roll round that remote promontory, and along the southern shores of New Holland; and so rapid is the current setting to the eastward, into the great bight of Australia, caused by the perpetual westerly storms, that ships from the eastern settlements, whether bound to England, to India, to the Cape, or the Mauritius, seldom or ever attempt to get round Cape Leeuwin to the westward. This fact is well known to all mariners who have navigated these seas.

Sailing vessels, my Lord, have been known to be two months trying to weather this headland without success, and then have been obliged to bear away for the eastern route.

Captain George Gilmore, who has commanded a steam vessel for five years on the line between Sydney, Port Phillip, and Van Diemen's Land, as well as to Moreton Bay in the north, in his evidence before the Select Committee of the Legislative Council, speaking of vessels of small steam power, says,—

“I do not think such a vessel would be fit for the Cape Leeuwin passage ; for that, it would be requisite to have a vessel of 1,000 tons and 400 horse power, the same as the Halifax mail-boats from Liverpool, at home.”

Captain Towns, a merchant in this city, and who formerly commanded a ship in the East India trade, and to these Colonies, in his evidence, speaking of the passage by Cape Leeuwin, replies to the question of the Committee.

“24. It would require vessels of much larger capacity and greater power to navigate that sea, than to make the voyage you propose ? I think the difference is so incalculable that it is hardly possible to draw a comparison.”

“25. The expense would be increased in a corresponding degree ? No doubt.”

If such be the nature of the weather which prevails during at least one-half of the year on the southern coasts of New Holland, how (it may be asked) will a ship like the Sarah Sands, whose

steam power is to her tonnage as 1 to 8, be able to make head against the adverse gales, seas, and currents?

No doubt she might be able to do so, and after much tear and wear get round the Leeuwin.

After contending for a month or six weeks with head seas, and winds, she might even reach King George's Sound, or Gage Roads, in a shorter period.

Having taken in a good supply of coal, (that is taking it for granted that the Western Australians have opened their lately discovered coal mines, and a good store is already waiting her arrival), she makes a start for the Cape, the same eternal westerly gales still blowing hard in her teeth.

But now, my Lord, there is no port under her lee—no depôt from whence she can supply her exhausted stock of fuel—the wide expanse of the Southern Ocean has to be crossed in the face of contrary winds and a heavy head sea.

Taking this into consideration, it is not unreasonable to suppose that she would be a month or six weeks before reaching the Cape of Good Hope, and even allowing her at quitting Swan River to run up to the verge of the Tropic, and there take advantage of the south-east trade wind, though it is not likely this would materially shorten the voyage. When she reaches Table Bay from eight to ten weeks of the passage have been expended; and if to that we add—even under the most favourable circumstances—to the latter portion of the voyage, the period required to reach London from the Cape, and we have a length of

time within which it is often performed by ships from this port, *via* Cape Horn.

But perhaps Mr. Hays does not contemplate the return to England of his auxiliary screw propelled vessels in the manner I have described, but that they should, on leaving Sydney, continue their course round the globe, touching at New Zealand, Terra del Fuego, the Falkland Islands, and from thence shape their course direct for London, calling at some convenient place on the route to coal. No doubt, in this instance, Mr. Hays has pointed out the necessity of forming coal depôts at Cape Horn and the Falkland Islands,—places notoriously deficient in any article approaching the character of fuel; but surely the further absurdity of carrying out this plan in this direction need not be dwelt upon.

It has been argued in favour of this line, that these large steam ships, propelled by the auxiliary screw, would offer first-rate opportunities for the deportation of emigrants on a large scale to the Australian Colonies, and that the conveyance of them, together with the advantages which would be presented by a commerce, extended and developed by means of this steam navigation, would amply remunerate a Company who would undertake to carry it into operation.

But emigration on a scale sufficiently large, to make it a source from whence a Company could derive their chief support and profit, could never be calculated on under the present Land Regulations.

On this point, Mr. Stuart Alexander Donaldson, a merchant of this city, observes in his evidence—"No

doubt the Cape of Good Hope line would open the way to the emigration of English people to a certain extent, but it has not the advantage of opening the eastern trade at all. With regard to the emigration of capitalists, the Indian line would, I think, be preferred, because it offers the advantage of intercourse and acquaintance with many interesting countries, and satisfies a vast amount of curiosity, which to many persons is an important consideration. With regard to the labouring class of immigrants, I do not think that either the eastern or the Cape line would be of any avail: the immigration of labour must be by means of sailing ships, because people can be brought out at a much less expense by them."

If emigration is to be made an Imperial question, and is to be provided for out of the British Treasury in the same manner as emigration to Canada, the matter might be viewed in a more favourable light; but as things remain at present, I cannot conjecture how an expensive line of large steam ships, by the Cape of Good Hope, is to be supported with success and profit to the proprietors, even supposing the annual grant from the Government to be on a scale as liberal as could be expected by the most sanguine.

Before closing these remarks on this scheme, I would wish to divest your Lordship's mind of any impression that I am at all interested in the adoption of the Indian route, or that I am the organ of a party interested in the establishment of the line by Singapore. On the contrary, the people of this Colony are anxious to see this line established, but not till the

transactions with the Mother Country are of such magnitude as to support it with advantage and profit to those concerned. In the meantime, they wish to have this extension by India, and I shall now proceed to examine the different routes proposed from that quarter.

3. Of the Route from Ceylôn by the Cocos, or Keelings, and Swan River.

It has been proposed that a line of steamers should leave Point de Galle in Ceylon, which place enjoys regular monthly communication with London, by means of the packets of the Peninsular and Oriental Company, and proceed to Sydney, touching at the Cocos (where a coal depôt would be formed), Swan River, Adelaide, and Port Phillip; but one of the principal objections which has been applied to the line by the Cape, would apply with equal justice to this one, namely—that to contend with the boisterous weather and seas on the south coast of New Holland, would require ships both of a larger tonnage and horse power, and would be attended consequently with much greater outlay than perhaps would be convenient to the Company which would undertake it—which could be avoided by passing to the northward through Torres Strait. In this case the only Colony which could be said would not participate in the benefits, would be the insignificant and languishing settlements in Western Australia.

It has been stated, with great truth, by Captain Beaufort, the hydrographer, in his report on this subject to the Admiralty, dated 24th September, 1846.

speaking of the route by Torres Strait, which he decidedly approves of—"From Sydney the mails would be forwarded to the neighbouring settlements without delay, as there is a regular overland post to Melbourne, and another from thence to Adelaide. Steamers now ply regularly between Sydney and Port Phillip, and Launceston, and easy contracts might be made for the furtherance of the mails to Swan River and New Zealand.

"Whereas, by the scheme proposed in Mr. Sharpe's, and other letters, the steam vessels, from the day they quitted Point de Galle, would avoid all collateral aid in finding their line; they would have to run direct for those miserable coral reefs, called the Keelings, or Cocos, which can scarcely be said to be inhabited, and which are so low and small, that there would be a constant difficulty in finding them, and where the continued surf would much impede the business of coaling.

"From thence to Australia they would cross an open sea, where the heavy western swell is notorious, and peculiarly unsuited to steam navigation, and throughout which they would, during the winter season, be sure of tempestuous weather. And finally, by this process, Sydney, the seat of Government, would be the last place to receive Her Majesty's mails. If, therefore, Government is inclined to make any sacrifice in favour of those thriving and important settlements, by facilitating their rapid communications with the Mother Country, I would strenuously urge their Lordships to recommend that it should be

effected by a sufficient number of steam vessels of competent power, and by the Singapore and Batavia route."

4. Of the route by Singapore, Sunda Straits, the Cocos, and Swan River.

I now come to the fourth plan of connecting these Colonies with the Mother Country by steam navigation, extended from Singapore, through the Straits of Sunda, Balli, or Lomboek, touching at the Cocos to coal, and from thence to Sydney by the Swan, &c.

But I shall not occupy your Lordship's attention by discussing the merits of this plan, as it is quite clear that the same objections urged by Captain Beaufort to the last mentioned scheme will apply with equal force to this one.

5. Of the route from Singapore by Torres Strait to Sydney, returning by Cape Leeuwin, or the Western passage, &c., &c., &c.

The plan which I am about to consider is one which I believe has been recommended by Lieutenant Pascoe, R.N., late of Her Majesty's surveying ship the "Beagle," an officer of great experience of the seas and coasts of New Holland,—and by others.

But, before discussing the merits of this route, it will be necessary for me to enter into some explanation of the nature of the winds which blow during the two seasons on that portion of the globe which lies between Singapore and Sydney.

On the *east* coast of New Holland, during the months which intervene between April and November, from the 26th degree of south latitude to the equator,

and between these parallels westward as far as the African continent, the south-east trade wind prevails.

But in the month of November this wind recedes with the sun towards the tropic of Capricorn as far as the 12th degree of south latitude, between which parallel and beyond the tropic as far sometimes as 30 degrees south, it blows during the whole year steady, and never changing ; so that a ship leaving the Heads of Port Jackson after May, bound for Singapore, will almost immediately fall in with this trade wind, and spreading her studding-sails to the breeze, she will glide through seas as smooth as an inland lake, entering the Barrier Reef, she will carry the same propitious gale through Torres Strait, and along the parallel of 9 degrees or 10 degrees south, till reaching the island of Lombock or Balli, she will pass through either of these Straits, and shaping her course for the port of her destination, will perhaps arrive there within the space of four weeks, without having materially altered the position of her yards and sails.

This is the description of weather a ship from Sydney, bound to Singapore through Torres Strait, would be sure to meet with from May till November ; and during the same period of the year that these gentle gales, so favourable to ships bound from this to India, blow along the northern shores of New Holland, the most terrific tempests prevail from the westward, on the south coast from Cape Leeuwin, as have already been described.

From November until May, along those parallels which lie between the equator and 12° south, em-

bracing the entire northern coasts of New Holland, New Guinea, and the numerous groups in its neighbourhood, the Islands which lie to the westward, and are contiguous to the track of vessels bound for Singapore, viz.—Timor Laut, Timor, Flores, Sambawa, Lombock, Balli, Celebes, Java, and Sumatra, what is there called the westerly monsoon prevails. It is also called the rainy monsoon, and blows from points of the compass varying from north-west to west-south-west, accompanied with hazy weather and squalls. Sometimes this wind extends as far south as the 15th degree, and more especially on the west coast of this continent, where it assumes a more southerly direction, and blows not unfrequently in hard gales, and occasionally in hurricanes. But throughout the entire year south-west winds may be reckoned on in this part of the coast, although at some distance from the land the S. E. trade wind has the ascendancy.

Now, at the period of the year when this monsoon prevails within the tropic, the summer season has set in. On the southern shores of this vast Island Continent, and along the whole line of coast between Port Jackson and the settlements in Western Australia, easterly winds may be looked for with fine weather, and it is only at this season that a ship may, with any degree of certainty, attempt the passage round the Leeuwin to the westward.

The plan by which, in this instance, steam communication is proposed to be effected, is the following:—That a steamer, leaving Singapore between the months

of November and May, during the westerly monsoon, will call at Batavia, and having taken in a good supply of coal, will steer for Torres Strait, carrying a fair wind all the way, touching at Port Essington, and a depôt to be formed near Cape York; after passing this Cape, will meet the S. E. trade wind, which she will have to make head against for about 15 degrees.

We will assume she has reached Sydney in due course, and is ready to start on her return. It has been asserted that the best route for her to adopt would be the western one by the Leeuwin, and along the west coast, calling at Adelaide, King George's Sound, and Swan River. She would have favourable winds on the southern and western coasts, and would avoid the adverse monsoons through Torres Strait to Singapore.

If leaving Singapore between May and November, it has been urged on the other hand, with some degree of propriety, that she should proceed through Sunda, Balli, or Lombock Straits, touch at the Cocos for coal, and take the western route for Sydney, calling at the Swan, Adelaide, &c.

During this season, by this plan, she would have the benefit of the prevailing westerly gales, and avoid the easterly monsoon, which would be directly opposed to her by Torres Strait.

She would return by the Northern route, and carry with her favourable breezes over smooth seas, which have been already described.

There are objections to this scheme—among the the chief—the expenses attending the formation of

the numerous depôts for coal will immediately strike your Lordship's attention, as well as that of any Company contemplating the undertaking.

Some of the objections already stated with regard to the other plans will apply equally to this.

It is true, that South Australia and Swan River would participate in some of the advantages resulting from its adoption; but as it would only be in one direction, and that only for one-half of the year, I cannot see, that if this scheme was to be carried out, it would be of material importance to either of these colonies; besides the enormous cost of keeping up three or four extra coal depôts and establishments would not be commensurate to the benefits derived; and the inconvenience accompanying the packets returning by a different route, would be almost insuperable.

6. Of the route from Singapore by Torres Strait.

Having now laid before your Lordship five different plans to effect this desirable object, all of which it has been shown are objectionable, I have only to consider the merits of that route which I believe is the one the people of this Colony are anxious that the Imperial Government should encourage.

Your Lordship is no doubt well aware that it has been recommended by the Legislative Council in the Report of the Select Committee appointed to inquire into the matter on the 16th September, 1846, by Lieutenant Waghorn, R.N., Captain Beaufort, R.N., Captain Philip Parker King, R.N., Captain Stokes, R.N., Captain Blackwood, R.N.; and other authorities

of unquestionable weight, are its strenuous advocates; and it is the opinion of all who have given this important subject any attention in this Colony, that steam communication could be effected by this route to much greater advantage, and with much less expense, than by any other.

The plan is, that steam vessels should leave Singapore monthly, and at periods immediately after the arrival there of the English mails, and proceed to Sydney *via* Torres Strait.

There is some diversity of opinion with respect to carrying out the detail of this scheme, and regarding the places where coal depôts should be established. However, I shall take upon myself to name the following places, which would be most eligible for that purpose, namely, Sourabaya in the island of Java, the island of Timor, Cape York in Torres Strait, and Moreton Bay in New South Wales. If need be, the vessels might also touch at Batavia, Ampanam in the island of Lombock, or some port in Balli. Large numbers of native passengers might be procured in these ports for Singapore, or even for Australia.

No doubt that fewer coal depôts will be required if large steam ships are put on this line, as one at Cape York, which is about half way, would in that case be almost sufficient; but as it has been contemplated that steamers of a smaller tonnage and horse-power would be more suitable, it would be prudent to have four depôts, as have been mentioned. It has been suggested that the steamers, when bound for Sydney, should proceed through Torres Strait by the inner

passage, so ably surveyed by Captain King, and no doubt by so doing, they would have the great advantage of smooth water as far as Break Sea Spit, in latitude 24° south, and thereby in a great measure avoid the violence of the south-east trade wind, which would be contrary, and which at periods blows with considerable force, and also the head sea occasioned by it. But, on the other hand, it must be borne in mind that the inner passage, although the water is smooth, and the effect of the adverse trade wind is broken by the Barrier Reefs, is one full of dangers. The vessels would have to anchor at night until the southern entrance was cleared, and however accurate Captain King's chart of this passage may be, still the hidden shoals, rocks, and sand banks are so numerous, that most of the future discoveries of the dangers will, in all probability, be at the expense of the unfortunate vessel which may strike on them, and in some instances of the lives of their crews and passengers, as was the case last year with the "Heroine," from Sydney to Singapore, of which vessel the greater number of the crew and passengers were in the short space of about five minutes called into eternity.

Of this passage I may quote the opinion of Mr. George Windsor Earl, a gentleman whose extensive researches among the islands of the Indian Archipelago are probably well known to your Lordship; in his evidence before the Select Committee of the Legislative Council, he observes:—

"I would prefer what is known as Blackwood's Beacon Passage, if the steamers are sufficiently power-

ful to contend against the trade wind, and are able to carry coal sufficient to steam to Moreton Bay or Sydney ; if otherwise, the inner route must be adopted. Here a vessel would have much smoother water than if outside the reefs ; but a greater degree of vigilance would be required, and it would be unsafe to run in the night when to the north of latitude 16°.

“I think, however, that upon an average, five nights or sixty hours would be lost by the inner route, against from twelve to twenty-four hours by the Beacon Passage. A portion of this excess might, however, be regained by the greater speed of the steamer when inside the reefs, owing to the comparative smoothness of the water. When, however, as probably will be the case, at no distant period, light-houses are erected at the spots where the navigation is most difficult, the inner passage will be far preferable to the other ; indeed, even now, it is difficult to say which route is most to be recommended, experience alone can clear up this point.”

Mr. Earl, in another part of his evidence, recommends that the vessels should steer along the northern shores of the islands which lie between Timor and Java. No doubt when the monsoons were adverse, this would be the best track, although attended with great hazard, from the numerous shoals and small islands ; but the water would be smooth, and the strength of the contrary monsoons materially avoided. Under other circumstances, and with favourable monsoons, the more open route through the Timor Sea ought to have the preference.

The hurricanes mentioned by Mr. Earl, as occurring during the westerly monsoon, generally blow from north-west to south-south-west.

The writer experienced one last January, on his passage from China, in the ship "Emma Eugenia," between Lombock and the north-west point of New Holland, which lasted four days, and the ship narrowly escaped being driven on the lee shore of the Continent. It will probably be found that those tempests are more common to the vicinity of North-west Cape than to the islands situated north of the Timor Sea.

It cannot be said that much advantage would be gained by the steamers calling at Port Essington; it would entail a deviation from the direct course by Booby Island and Cape York of at least 300 miles.

This settlement has no trade or connection with New South Wales, or any of the Indian ports; indeed I am not aware that the place has any commerce at all. It appears by all accounts to be in not more forward a position than when it was founded by Sir Gordon Bremer, in 1838. The Imperial Government seem to have allowed this plantation to languish for want of attention; no exertion, it is evident, has been made to induce the settlement of capitalists from the Southern Colonies or England, or labourers from the islands in the vicinity.

Notwithstanding all that has been said in favour of this station by Mr. Earl, Sir Gordon Bremer, Captain Stokes, and others, there is but one opinion, and that is that Port Essington is not the best part of the north coast of New Holland for a British Colony, and I am

not wrong when I surmise that the Government themselves are well aware of this fact, from the decided discouragement given to the sale of the lands, and to the settlement of capitalists, and other permanent residents.

In another portion of this letter I will endeavour to point out where that settlement should be erected, but in the mean time it must be clear that little good would result from the packets touching at Port Essington, even if it is to be retained by the Government as a station, which I can scarcely believe will be the case.

It will now be my task to state as briefly as possible the advantages of this plan over the others, the considerations which will no doubt influence your Lordship's decision ; and show, that the interests of Australia in India and the countries of the East are of such magnitude, that they may be weighed in the balance with the importance of her relations to the Mother Country. If this case can be made out, I have no doubt your Lordship will immediately give this scheme the liberal encouragement it merits.

It can be carried out at a much cheaper rate than any of the plans by Panama, by Galle, or by the Cape of Good Hope ; because the distance to be connected by Panama would be 8520 miles, the remainder of the distance being navigated by the West India steamers ; because the distance to Ceylon by Swan River would be 5670 miles ; and the entire distance of 12,920 miles by the Cape would have to be effected, whereas the distance from Sydney to Singapore, to be connected by this route, is only about 4354 miles.

And it has been decided by competent authorities, that four vessels would be necessary to keep up a monthly communication between these places ; and that the most suitable sized vessels for performing the work with profit would be steamers of about 500 tons and 200 horse-power.

It has been estimated by the Comptroller of Steam Machinery to the Admiralty, that the first cost of four steamers of this description would be £90,000, and that the annual expense of these vessels, including wear and tear of hulls, spars, and machinery, wages, victuals, and coals, (taking the average price of twenty-five shillings per ton for that article,) would be £48,298. Whereas by the Cape route, I have already stated, a first cost would be entailed of at least £300,000, and the annual expenses would no doubt be great in proportion.

On this point Captain King observes, "The vessels employed on the *Northern Line*, in consequence of the more moderate character of the weather that prevails on that route, need not be so large, nor so powerful as those that would necessarily be used on the other lines; the wear and tear would be but trifling, and the engines, from the sea being throughout smooth, would not be likely to be damaged. The expense, therefore, would on these accounts be comparatively small."

Mr. Earl also observes,—“The impression on my mind is, that the route by Torres Strait is the most desirable, on account of the smoothness of the water, and the general mildness of the weather, so that throughout the entire distance, it is not likely that

any bad weather would be experienced ; indeed that portion of the route which lies between Moreton Bay and Sydney, is the only portion in which any considerable amount of tempestuous weather might be expected.

“The route by Cape Leeuwin is, I think, scarcely feasible, as a steamer proceeding along the south coast of Australia would be liable to damage from the westerly gales that prevail there.

“I have had some experience of the weather off that coast within the last few days, and can vouch for it being such as a steamer would find difficulty in contending against. Larger and more powerful vessels would be required for that route, and an expensive depôt would also be required at King George’s Sound, in the event of the steamer being obliged to put back there for repairs.”

Another circumstance which would materially lessen the annual expense of keeping up this communication, would be the great facility with which the depôts on the line could be supplied with coals, by the vessels which pass through Torres Strait for the different ports in the east.

The number of vessels which clear out annually from Sydney, bound in that direction, I will afterwards state; but I may here remark, that the opportunities for supplying these depôts will be so plentiful, and the price of coals so moderate here, (viz., seven shillings per ton,) that we may safely reckon on them being supplied along the line to Singapore, at from £1 5s. to £1 14s. per ton.

On this point the Report of the Select Committee of the Legislative Council observes,—“ The facility of forming and supplying depôts for coal is peculiarly great on the northern line. In the entire course between Sydney and Singapore, it is not necessary to stretch a greater distance from land than one hundred miles. On the whole line through Torres Strait and the Timor and Java seas, there are numerous eligible spots, at convenient distances, where stations for this purpose might be established. There is one very obvious advantage of this route, namely, that the depôts for coals may be supplied at a much cheaper rate than on any other line, by means of the numerous vessels which proceed annually in ballast, from this Colony and from Van Diemen's Land to India, in search of freight. The port of Newcastle being also now declared a free port of entry and clearance, and coals of excellent quality being there procurable at seven shillings per ton, the necessary supply of fuel will be procurable at a comparatively moderate cost.

It has been already stated, that the annual expenses of four steamers running monthly would amount to nearly £50,000.

The Legislative Council have voted £6000 per annum for a period of three years, to the encouragement of steam navigation by this line. And it has been estimated, that an annual amount of at least £20,000 would be available for this purpose from the postage on letters, including those transmitted by this conveyance to and from the neighbouring colonies. So that if the Imperial Government were even to give

so small a sum as £30,000 per annum, it would not be a much larger sum than they would derive from the increased revenue of the Post Office, which would be nearly doubled by means of the more rapid conveyance.

With the Imperial and Colonial grants, amounting to £36,000 per annum, it is to be inferred that a Company might be induced to perform the contract. The deficiency of £14,000 might be derived from freight and passengers.

It has been urged that the advantages by this route, with respect to England, would be merely postal; whereas, the route by the Cape would facilitate emigration and the transport of merchandise, as well as postal intelligence. But that objection in favour of the latter, may be easily upset. Immigration from England to Australia must, for years to come, be effected by sailing vessels, from the cheaper rate at which it can be done; and I should say, it would matter little to the colonists whether immigrants were five months or seventy days on their passage, provided they did come. Neither do I think that it requires steam communication to induce the working classes of Great Britain to emigrate: they are generally ready enough to do so at all times, and more especially during seasons of distress; and it is generally understood, that at no period has there ever been much difficulty experienced by emigration agents in procuring the numbers required.

With regard to the emigration of men of capital, the extra expense of the passage by India would

never deter, although the rapidity of transit might induce many to visit Australia.

The same may be said of merchandise. It matters little whether the goods are two or three months longer than the intelligence which had advised their shipment, as this intelligence would provide the supply to the demand just in the same manner as if the goods had been conveyed as rapidly. And postal intelligence would be much quicker by India than by the Cape.

It has been said, that this quick communication would affect the mercantile interests in the Colony, by lowering their profits; but this is taking a very narrow-minded view of the question; and those merchants who look upon the matter in this light, must be very short-sighted indeed—they must be very ignorant of the true interest of the mercantile community, who would argue that it is not identical with that of the public.

Rapid intelligence keeps a market supplied to that extent, that the merchant must sell at the smallest possible profit at which it will remunerate him. If he cannot do so, the same cause will check further supplies; thus the price of merchandise, of all kinds, whether it be manufactures from England, or sugar, or tea from India and China, will be equalised; will be kept at that point, which will conduce most to consumption; and if low prices benefit the community, increased consumption must benefit the merchant—his profits will be lower, but they will be more certain, and his business will be extended in an equal

ratio. Thus this illiberal theory, that steam communication injures the mercantile interest, falls to the ground—a remnant of the old-fashioned system of monopoly and protection. It may yet be supported by a few greedy speculators, who would batten on the necessities of their fellow-creatures; but it will be eschewed by every enlightened man, who has the good of his country, as well as his own real interest at heart.

It has also been argued that the exchanges would be much affected by this plan, but it would be difficult to point out how they could be much affected by the substituting bills of exchange drawn on London at six months after date, for bills drawn at sixty days after sight, which would be the case by this arrangement.

My Lord, I think it can be shown that such is the magnitude of our increasing commerce with China, Manila, Java, Singapore, Calcutta, and other places in the East, that a mere postal communication with England by this route, as well as a rapid and regular conveyance for goods and passengers by steam, without any land carriage intervening, to those ports in the East, the produce of which we are very large consumers, and which are beginning to take our produce to a considerable extent in return, will be of decidedly greater advantage to Australia than the line by the Cape, which must, it is clear, be attended with uncertainty and irregularity.

From the 1st of January till the 31st of December, 1847, there have cleared out of the port of Sydney for

India, and the various ports in the East, no less than 71 vessels, with an aggregate of 21,517 register tons ; of these, 32 vessels, measuring 10,747 tons, have passed through Torres Strait. During the same period, the import of tea from China to Sydney and Melbourne has reached 53,500 chests, or about 3,477,500 lbs. ; of this quantity only about 3,000 chests came direct to Melbourne. The total value of the tea imported is £173,875, and the value of other China goods imported during the year, exclusive of sugar, may be set down at about £30,000, and 28 vessels have been employed to carry this article.

During the same period, 52 vessels have entered the ports of Sydney and Melbourne from Manila, China, and other places in the East, loaded with sugar ; the total quantity imported has been 11,961 tons ; of which 1,361 tons was shipped direct for Melbourne.

The total value of sugars imported to New South Wales for 1847, was £251,181, and the total number of vessels employed carrying this quantity of tea and sugar, besides coffee, cigars, and Manila cordage, which have entered the two ports during the year was 65, with an aggregate register tonnage of 15,312 tons ; The greater portion of those vessels have arrived from China and Manila, from the latter place we derive our chief supplies of sugar and coffee. From Calcutta, Singapore, and Java, Sydney imports sugar, rice, rum, coir rope, gunny bags, castor oil, saltpetre, pepper, nutmegs, mace, cloves, and other valuable articles. The total value of spices alone, imported into Sydney, for the two years, 1846 and 1847,

was about £10,000, and these are articles that would bear a high freight, from their valuable and unbulky nature, so that the ports of Sydney and Melbourne alone, may be said to take every year from India, China, Manila, and other places in the East, produce amounting in value to nearly £500,000, at least the imports of 1847 shew this to be the case.

During the years 1844, 1845, 1846, and 1847, 3000 horses were shipped from this port to India, chiefly to Calcutta. The greater number of these horses were purchased for the Indian army, by the agents of the East India Company, in the colony; but the Company have broken up their establishment here, for the time being, principally on account of the heavy expenses attending their shipments, from losses by deaths on board the sailing vessels. Steam communication would no doubt have the effect of reviving this trade, as horses could be transported on the decks of large steamers, at little or no risk.

Another branch of our export trade in that direction is that of sandal-wood, which has been carried on for some years from this port to China, and is now becoming of great importance. Seven or eight vessels belonging to this port are at present engaged collecting this wood among the New Hebrides and other islands in that quarter, and not much less than 1000 tons of this commodity was shipped last year for Canton and Shanghai, where it generally realizes upwards of £30 per ton.

The biche de mer, or trepang fishery, is also beginning to attract the attention of enterprising merchants

of this City. Mr. Benjamin Boyd, ever ready to embark his capital in developing the resources of the colony, is at present fitting out a vessel, to prosecute this trade on the north coast of the Continent, and among the islands of the Indian Archipelago, whilst many others are giving it their consideration.

This pursuit is rather a novelty from this place, and it requires considerable skill to cure the fish, but with the assistance of Malay curers, whose services will be necessary at first, there can be no doubt that the occupation will be very lucrative to the enterprise of those who are about to engage in it.

This article is very valuable in China, being worth from £5 to upwards of £200 per ton, according to quality.

This lucrative fishery, says Mr. Crawford, in his valuable work on the Indian Archipelago, has been prosecuted solely by the Malays, Bugis, and Chinese, from time immemorial. It is found in great quantities in the neighbourhood of Torres Strait, and the islands of the Archipelago. And if these islands were brought into closer connection with New South Wales, by steam navigation, this trade of itself would no doubt become a source of vast wealth to the Colony; and it is not saying too much to prognosticate that at no distant period our total supply of tea and sugar will be paid for in those and other commodities, the produce of these islands, whose vast resources have yet to be developed.

But one of the greatest advantages arising from rapid intelligence, is the effect it has in staving off

famine from the countries which have the benefit of it. Mr. Stuart Alexander Donaldson, in his evidence, observes, "For instance, with such means of rapid communication with India and England, it is not likely that the article of grain would rise to so high a price as it did in the years 1838 and 1839, when it reached a famine rate. I should think such a state of things quite impossible if this communication were established, as it would bring Java and other rice and corn growing countries of the East Indies within twenty-six to thirty-six days' sail, instead of their being, as they now are, fifty to ninety days' sail from us.

But if this Colony would be saved from famine, Great Britain might in a great measure be relieved from these direful calamities. Australia has generally a large surplus stock of grain on hand, and the quantity which could be produced from her fertile plains can scarcely be estimated. Van Diemen's Land has long been the chief granary of this part of the world; but the rich provinces of Port Phillip and South Australia already compete successfully with her in agricultural pursuits, whilst New Zealand, at no distant period, may outvie them.*

And if intelligence from England is to be two or three months quicker than it is at present, in cases of calamitous visitations, such as lately happened to Ireland, might not two or three months of famine be in a great measure relieved from these grain-growing Colonies, where the population is scant, and whose

* Two Maories, in New Zealand, have at present each 500 acres under wheat cultivation.

productions already stand in a tenfold greater ratio to the number of inhabitants, than those of any country under the sun ?

Government, as well as the East India Company, are now becoming alive to the enormous expense entailed by death, and loss of services, from bad health produced by the climate of India, among their servants, both civil and military. The extra expenditure required to keep up their large establishments can scarcely be calculated—establishments which are large in proportion to the enervating effects of the climate.

It is a well known fact, that many valuable public servants of the Company die every year, from their pecuniary circumstances being such as to prevent them incurring the very heavy costs, and loss of pay, attending the return for a period to their native land ; they are thereby deprived of the only chance left for renovating their shattered constitutions. But it has been argued with much truth and humanity, that if there was a quick and regular communication with the Australian colonies, it would be of the first importance to the officers and servants of the Indian Government, as the climate of Australia has been pronounced by medical men, and indeed experience has already confirmed the fact, to be of that peculiar salubrity required to restore to convalescence those who have lost their health under the sultry sun of tropical India.

It is also understood that there is an increasing desire on the part of the people residing in the East

Indies to visit Australia ; but communication has been so very irregular that numbers are deterred. Many of our influential settlers are gentlemen who have paid the Colony a visit, and liking the climate and country, have sold out and become permanent residents.

When the writer was in Hongkong in 1846, he met several gentlemen from Calcutta and other parts of India, who had come there in search of a conveyance to these Colonies. Such is the difficulty of procuring a passage from India to this quarter of the world, that Captain Arbuthnot Dallas, H.E.I.C.S., in his evidence before the Select Committee, observes, that he was seven months in getting here from Calcutta : "I went by Singapore and China first ; I was obliged to wait in China a month before I could get a vessel for Manila, and after I arrived at Manila, I had to wait another month before I could get a passage to Sydney."

Mr. Alexander Campbell, a merchant of this city, engaged in the trade with India, in his evidence, observes : "I have known parties who have been compelled to wait for months, and have then had to come by way of Mauritius, Singapore, or the Cape ; as an instance, I may mention that about the time I left Calcutta for England, in January 1845, a gentleman being desirous of visiting this Colony, and failing any direct opportunity, was obliged to proceed in a vessel to the Cape, and from thence to Hobart Town and Sydney. In the mean time I went to England by steam, made the circuit of England and Scotland,

returned to this Colony, having had a passage of four months out, and was only a little more than two months behind him. I could mention many instances where parties had been six or seven months on the passage from India."

My Lord, when we weigh all those considerations, attending the opening of this navigation, we come to the conclusion that the connections of India, and other countries in the East, with these Colonies, are of the most important character, and that they are rapidly becoming worthy of increasing attention; that their mutual interests will attain much greater magnitude by steam communication *via* Singapore; and that the results springing from these relations are such, that they may be placed in the balance with the benefits to be derived from the scheme by the Cape of Good Hope.

The Legislative Council of South Australia have lately recommended the line by the Cape, and have voted £3,000 per annum towards that purpose; they have come to this determination without giving any reason for their preference. There appears to have been a great dearth of information on the subject among the members, and no inclination whatever shown to make any enquiry into the merits of the Northern line; each member, it is evident, had a personal interest in the plan chosen, and all discussion on the nature of the other routes was carefully avoided. No doubt this body of men had the interests of their Colony at heart as well as their own, and would have opposed the adoption of any route by which Adelaide

would not be the first port of call ; but surely your Lordship will take into consideration the wishes and opinions of the elder Colony of New South Wales, and of the metropolis, and central seat of Government, Sydney, before deciding in this affair. And it should also be borne in mind, that a mail is despatched from this city overland to Melbourne twice, and to Adelaide once every week ; and the steamer "Shamrock" starts once a month for the former place and Van Diemen's Land, whilst the latter port has also lately been connected by a gentleman to whose indefatigable enterprise Australia is much indebted, Mr. Boyd, who has placed his steam-ship, the "Juno," on this line to keep up monthly communication, so that if the extension was effected to Sydney, the other Colonies, with the exception of Western Australia and New Zealand, would be in a position to reap immediate advantages from it.

Before taking leave of this subject, which has been perhaps already too long dwelt upon, I may observe that it is understood to be the general wish of the people of Sydney, that the contract for this great undertaking should be given to the Peninsular and Oriental Steam Navigation Company, that magnificent and successful corporation, who have done so much towards the developing the resources of our Indian Empire. There is a strong feeling in favour of this Company. If placed in their hands, confidence would be inspired that the work would be well done ; besides, this is the only Company who could immediately commence operations.

Another Company, it is said, has been formed in

London to carry out this scheme ; but your Lordship will no doubt see to their competency before entering into any arrangements.

It cannot be urged there is traffic enough on the route to admit of an opposition line of steamers running with profit to the proprietors.

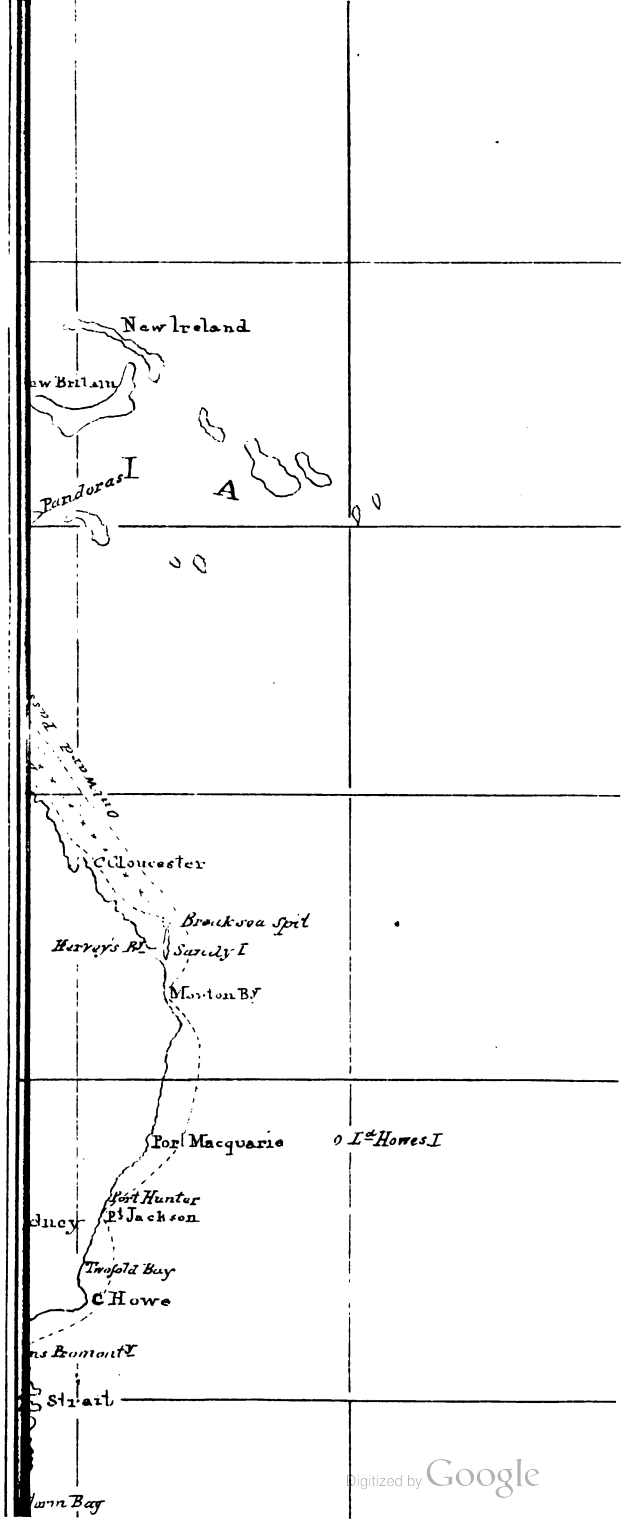
Much as competition is to be desired in most matters where the public interests are concerned, in this case it would be very injurious to the engagements of the Peninsular and Oriental Company, which are now of such paramount importance to the Empire at large, that their interests, and those of the nation, become almost identical.

To cripple the operations of an important body like this, by premature competition, even in a national point of view, cannot be looked on as a prudent measure.

And it is for this reason, as well as the one already mentioned, namely, that this Company are in a position to put this scheme into immediate execution, and that more effectually and better than any other body to be formed, whose experience would have to be gained, and probably at the expense of all parties concerned, that the people of New South Wales would hail with delight, your Lordship giving the assistance of the Government to this Company to enable them to carry out this plan.

I now bring to a close my observations on this subject, and pass to that which will form the concluding portion of this letter. It may happen, that before it reaches your Lordship, this route may have been

adopted by the Government ; in that event, some of the remarks set down in this paper may be of service to the Company about to commence operations. If such should turn out to be the case, I shall have had my reward for the pleasing toil of compiling them ; and I shall only add, that there is not one single fact, or statement made, in the foregoing pages, that will not bear the strictest examination as to truth and authenticity.



OF THE EXPEDIENCY
OF
FORMING A SETTLEMENT
AT
CAPE YORK, TORRES STRAIT.

At an epoch when the genius of the nation seems devoted to colonization, it may not be considered out of place to point out a situation where may be laid the foundation of a flourishing Colony, and a large commercial city.

The influence which England at present exercises over the nations of the world, even the most barbarous, is of such a wide-spread nature, that to preserve it, consolidate her power, and extend her commerce, she must go on founding colonies wherever they may be deemed necessary. For the same purpose that political agencies are required at such Courts as those of Lahore and Caubul, so in other countries, and among extended groups of islands, cut up into innumerable tribes and petty states, as China and the Indian Archipelago, where it is impracticable to have ambassadors and Government agents, stations and settlements must be formed,—hence Singapore, Malacca, Penang, and the more recent plantations of Hongkong and Labuan, which from being mere stations, rapidly

rise to be opulent cities, under the equitable laws of England.

As this letter has been already spun out to a greater length than I had anticipated, my remarks on the subject which is comprised in this part of it will be brief; but I trust they will be of that nature, which will draw your Lordship's immediate attention to the necessity of forming a settlement at Cape York, Torres Strait.

I do not take upon myself to point out the exact spot for the foundation of a city,—that may be done by the Commanders of the different surveying expeditions to that quarter of the globe, and those more intimately acquainted with the localities than I have any pretension to.

It will be sufficient for me here to show that a settlement should be formed, if not at Cape York, at some place near it, in Endeavour Strait, such as Prince of Wales Island, Possession Island, or any other spot in the neighbourhood, where an eligible harbour might be found.

I have already stated, that during the year 1847, 32 vessels, with an aggregate of 10,747 register tons, from Sydney, passed through Torres Strait, bound to the different ports in the east. As Cape York is situated in the direct tract of these vessels, it is reasonable to infer that few of them would pass the Strait without calling at any settlement which might be formed there, to transact business, and to take any produce which might offer on freight to China, or elsewhere.

Cape York is also about half way between Singa-

pore and Sydney, and in the event of steam communication being established by this route, presents one of the most convenient situations on the line for a coal-dépôt ; thus this question, as has been already said, becomes intimately connected with the one previously disposed of, and may be considered only secondary to it, as to advantages accruing to Great Britain and Australia, because steam communication with Australia, China, Singapore, and the islands of the Indian Archipelago, would materially assist in developing the resources of, and calling into importance any Colony in this situation, which might receive the fostering consideration of the Imperial Government, and the benefits to England and Australia would be very great, as will be hereafter shown.

If the expeditions and discoveries of Sir Thomas Mitchell and Captain Sturt have proved, that insuperable impediments are still in the way of connecting the Southern Colonies with the north coast, towards the centre of the Continent, those of the intrepid Dr. Leichhardt have shown that there can be no difficulty in doing so, along the dividing range ; and this situation would offer peculiar facilities for overland communication, being at the terminus of that range which extends parallel with the coast from Wilson's Promontory in the south.

In founding a settlement of this description, whose prosperity will at first be derived not so much from the resources of the country itself in which it may be situated, as from its eligibility as an emporium for the productions of the thickly populated islands in the

neighbourhood, and its vicinity to the track of vessels bound to the eastern ports, much of its success will depend on the situation chosen.

If Singapore has, in the short period of twenty-eight years, risen to be one of the most opulent cities of the East, it is entirely owing to the consummate judgment displayed by Sir Stamford Raffles in fixing on its site. Its prosperity has been derived not from any resources of the island, but from its being admirably situated on the principal avenue of Indian commerce, and from its eligibility as a mart where the industrious inhabitants of the Indian Archipelago might dispose of their productions in exchange for the manufactures of Europe.

Singapore was also founded to counteract the evil effects on British interests in that quarter, entailed by the restrictive commercial policy of the Dutch; that it has done so in a great measure there can be no doubt, but not to that extent which could be desired, as our commerce with most of the islands under the blighting influence of that narrow-minded nation, in spite of the Treaty of 1824, is still on a footing little better than a contraband trade.

It may be argued that a colony formed near Cape York, with the special encouragement of the British Government, and having the advantage of steam communication, would rapidly rise into importance—would, in a great measure, annihilate the ruinous policy of the Dutch, and would, in conjunction with Singapore in the west, and Labuan in the north, enable Great Britain to command the entire valuable commerce of the Archipelago.

That the neighbourhood of Cape York is eminently adapted for a site, is clear : it would have all the advantages of Singapore, being situated on the great avenue of Australian traffic to India, China, and Manila ; and it would soon become a vast dépôt for supplying the surrounding islands with British manufactures in exchange for their produce. Situated in Torres Strait, it would become the key to the Indian Ocean from the Pacific, and in a military and political point of view, it would be the Gibraltar of the East.

I have already stated, that the value of tea and other China produce, imported into New South Wales during the year 1847, amounted to £203,875, and that the period was not far distant when that article, as well as sugar, might be paid for in the produce of the Colony, of the South Sea Islands, and the Indian Archipelago, instead of money, which is the principal export to that quarter at the present period ; and this desirable object, it is evident, may, in a great measure, be facilitated by the formation of a settlement at Cape York.

The soil and climate of the north coast has been stated by Mr. Earl to be well adapted for the growth of cotton, coffee, pepper, and other tropical productions. The Chinese, the Bugis, the people of Balli, Lombock, and other Islands of the Archipelago, would be encouraged to settle and cultivate the land, under the direction of capitalists from the Mother Country and Australia. An emporium would be formed for the sale of British goods suited to the wants of the natives of the Islands. Hither they

would flock with their productions, among the most valuable of which may be enumerated :—Cotton, coffee, spices, benzoin or frankincense, dragon's blood, sapan wood, sandal wood, betel nut, ivory, birds of paradise and argus pheasant feathers, birds' nests, lac, bees' wax, sharks' fins, tripang or sea slug, tortoiseshell, pearls, pearl shells, ambergris, tin, gold, diamonds, and other commodities suited for the China and Manila markets. These would be exchanged for British and Colonial manufactures shipped from Sydney, and taken in British vessels to these places for the purchase of tea and sugar. Thus a commerce would be established with Australia—the benefits of which would be shared by the Mother Country.

I cannot but infer that the sandal wood trade and sperm whale fishery, which are prosecuted with so much success from this port, would be extended by Colonial capitalists in that direction. The former article abounds, it is said, on the north coast of the continent, and is to be found on most of the Islands in the vicinity of the Timor Sea ; but from the restrictive policy of the Dutch, and the savage character of the natives in many of the islands, this lucrative branch of trade has not had much attention in that quarter from the English.

And when we bear in mind that the Chinese spend every year 90,000,000 dollars for incense to burn before their idols, the inference we must draw is, that the trade might be extended to an incalculable limit.

With respect to the sperm whale fishery, it is not improbable that a settlement in Torres Strait might

be found convenient for carrying on this occupation by means of vessels manned by Asiatics. It is notorious in Sydney, that such is the scarcity of labour in the Colony, and consequently mutinous behaviour on the part of the crews of our whalers, that this important interest is becoming lamentably depressed, and as far as it is dependant on British seamen, it must rapidly fall into decay, as owners of vessels engaged in the fishery are now turning their attention to procuring crews from New Zealand, the New Hebrides, and other Islands of the Pacific.

Mr. Crawford, speaking of the eligibility of the Archipelago for carrying on this fishery, observes—

“One great subject has not yet been alluded to—the *whale fishery*. In the seas which surround the Spice Islands, and particularly towards Timor and that portion of the Pacific Ocean which lies between the Archipelago and New Holland, the *cachelot* or spermaceti whale abounds. While the Spice Islands were in our possession, our whalers were in the habit of refreshing at Amboyna, which they found a convenient station for this purpose alone, though permitted to carry on no species of trade with it. Ten or twelve of them annually put in for refreshment at the port of Dili, in Timor. It is evident that any nation in possession of the Spice Islands, that has the wisdom to destroy the absurd monopoly of spices, and restore the industry of those countries to their natural state, may see them necessarily become a convenient station of the whale fishery. If industry and capital were suffered to take their natural course, the spice trade and whale fishery would be naturally combined, each mutually aiding the other.”

The tripang fishery, which, as has been stated, is receiving some attention in Sydney, is the most important and lucrative branch of commerce from the Archipelago to China: it is carried on entirely by Chinese capital, chiefly from the port of Macassar. The demand for this commodity in China is unlimited, and if encouragement were given to the Bugis of

Celebes, who are very expert in the curing of this fish, to become residents at the new settlement, in the vicinity of which these fish or slugs are very abundant, this profitable trade might be in a great measure transferred from the Chinese into the hands of British and Australian capitalists, and would become a source of great wealth to the new Colony.

It is a well-known fact, that all over the Indian Archipelago there exists among the natives, the most intense hatred against the Dutch. Indeed, since the first intercourse of that nation with that quarter in 1596, its history has been that of monopoly, cruelty, and oppression; but wherever the British have formed settlements, thither have congregated the Chinese as well as the people of the islands, to take advantage of our liberal system of commerce, and the greater security for property under our more just and equitable laws. On this point, observes Mr. Earl, in his work on the Eastern Seas:—

“It is a fact acknowledged by the Dutch themselves, that the Dyaks have retrograded since their establishment on the coast; indeed many tribes, formerly holding intercourse with the settlements, have discontinued their visits. The disgraceful system pursued by the European power, which has obtained a footing in Borneo, has proved far more injurious to the aborigines than to the other native inhabitants; it has stayed their progress towards improvement, and has reduced many individuals to the most abject misery; persons who formerly indulged in foreign products, now find it impossible, in consequence of the heavy increase in the price, to purchase those articles which they have learned to appreciate, and which have now become almost necessary to their existence.”

If the north-east coast of New Holland presents a comparatively barren aspect to the passing voyager, as the Gulf of Carpentaria is approached the fertility

of the land seems to improve; and from Cape York along the shores on the main land, and the islands which form Endeavour Strait, the soil appeared to the writer, when passing in 1846, to assume the rich verdure of the Tropics; but great richness of soil is not always necessary to the prosperity of a colony of this description.

Mr. Crawford gives an instance of this in his history. In the same page he gives a sketch of the principles on which a Colony of this description should be governed, as well as some of the benefits to be derived from its formation. His remarks are so appropriate to the present question that I shall take the liberty to transcribe the whole passage* :—

“ Perhaps the proudest example of the success of European establishments formed in the Archipelago, is that of the little settlement of Penang or Prince of Wales Island, already quoted. This is a small spot of barren soil, having a good harbour, but too far to the west, or, in other words, too remote from the most populous and productive parts of the Archipelago, and entirely out of the way of the easiest and safest avenue—the straits of Sunda. It was found without people; yet such was its rapid prosperity, that in twenty years it contained as many thousand inhabitants; and, if in the latter period of its history it had not been managed injudiciously, and the principles on which it was founded abandoned, its success might have gone on in the same ratio for many years.

“ With respect to the administration of such a colony, as now projected, a few general hints only can be given. There ought to exist the most unbounded freedom of commerce and settlement to persons of all nations and religions. It need hardly be insisted that the latter implies a right of private property in the soil, so unjustly and absurdly withheld from our countrymen in India; for without it the settlers would be no better than disreputable vagrants, having no attachment to the land, nor to the government that afforded them protection. To establish in all respects a free government, on a representative system, will be found, perhaps, impracticable with the motley population of which such a Colony would consist. To a representa-

* History of the Indian Archipelago, by John Crawford, F.R.S., vol. 3, p. 268.

tive body, however, the right of imposing taxes must be left, and if the representatives are chosen alike from all classes of the inhabitants, if the elective franchise be confined to those who by long residence have acquired the right of naturalization ; and to persons of considerable estate, no danger from turbulence or anarchy can be apprehended. A pure and impartial administration of a code of laws suited to the state of such a Colony, and adapted to the peculiar character of its varied population, will form the most important branch of its administration.

"With respect to the duty of the chief magistrate I need hardly insist upon a political maxim so well understood, as that the less he meddles in the internal details of the affairs of the Colony, and the more those details are committed to the intelligence and interests of those who are chiefly concerned, the better chance there will be of their being well conducted. His principal and most important occupation will consist in maintaining the foreign relations of the Colony. No control ought to be attempted over the independent governments of the neighbourhood, but a friendly and equal correspondence maintained with them. Above all things the imposition of treaties requiring exclusive privileges, or exemption from duties, ought to be avoided. It is evident that the greater the revenue that a native sovereign derives from his intercourse with strangers, the stronger will be his motives to protect their commerce, and encourage their resort to his country. An European merchant trading more cheaply than an Asiatic one, ought not to grudge paying the same duties. Beside, to the bigoted nations of Asia, innovations of all kinds are odious, and of themselves quite enough to excite distrust. The most suspicious of all innovations are those which trench, or seem to trench, on the personal interests or prerogatives of the sovereign.

"In such a magistrate, a thorough knowledge of the customs, usages, and institutions of the surrounding natives, with a knowledge of the language principally used in their intercourse, would be indispensable. The reputation of these acquirements, with a character for justice and integrity, are sure to attach the natives of the Indian islands to a surprising degree. Persons of high rank in possession of these qualities, acquire over the native mind an unbounded sway, and there is hardly any limit, indeed, to the confidence they repose in them.

"A moderate impost upon external commerce, which that commerce, well protected, should certainly afford, with the sale of public lands, and an excise on objects of vicious luxury, would afford a sufficient revenue to defray the expenses of government, and the charge of public works.

"I shall conclude this sketch with a short enumeration of some of the benefits which would be derived from such establishments. They would naturally become great emporia,—the native trader would find them the best and safest market to repair to, and the scattered productions of the Archipelago would be accumulated and stored at them in quantity for the convenience of the distant and inexperienced trader of Europe. The

European voyager would find there also the best market for his goods ; and the sacrifice of a large nominal profit would be compensated by the expedition with which his business would be dispatched, and by his immunity from those risks, dangers, and delays, into which his inexperience must necessarily commit him in a direct intercourse with the natives. It is sufficiently evident, in short, that, in this manner, a more agreeable, extensive, and beneficial intercourse to all the parties concerned would be conducted than in any other. More important and dignified objects, though perhaps more remote ones, would be gained by the presence of such colonies in the midst of a native and docile population. By means of them the arts, institutions, morals, and integrity of Europe, might in time be communicated to the natives of these distant regions, while they might contribute still earlier to give occupation to the population of those parts of the European world which are acknowledged to require new objects of employment."

But independent of the commercial advantages to be derived from a settlement in Torres Strait, the formation of one is absolutely called for on the score of humanity, as a place of refuge for the crews and passengers of vessels wrecked in the vicinity of the Strait ; and although since Captain Blackwood's chart of the Barrier Reefs has been published, these disastrous occurrences have in a great degree been stopped, still it cannot be expected, with the rapidly increasing trade of Australia in that direction, that so many vessels will be able to navigate this passage without casualties.

The only place of refuge at present is the barren rock called Booby Island, situated at the western entrance of the Strait, about 60 miles from Cape York, and 600 from Port Essington ; within a cave on the north side of this rock is occasionally to be found a supply of provisions and water, placed there by the Government of New South Wales for the benefit of shipwrecked mariners. I believe this store has often been the means of saving many lives, and I cannot

allow the present opportunity to pass, of paying a tribute of respect to the generosity and benevolent feeling displayed on the part of Captain Thomas Buckland, of the ship "Jane," and Captain George Brown, of the "Minerva," (of which latter vessel the writer was a passenger,) who anchored their ships for several hours off this rock for the purpose of contributing several casks of provisions and water to the store in the cave. Was this generous conduct, in every respect worthy the character of British seamen, more frequently imitated by ship masters, much of the misery attending disasters at sea might be alleviated.

It may be asked—would not our station at Port Essington answer every requisite as a settlement on the north coast? Experience has shown to the contrary. The history of its progress is little better than that of the previous settlements at Melville Island and Raffles Bay, and its future destiny will in all probability be the same, that of abandonment, unless the Government, as it is asserted, intend holding it as a mere station to prevent any other European power from taking possession of that part of the coast.

Among the chief causes of the failure of Port Essington, as a Colony, may be ranked the inconvenience of its position as a depôt of commerce; situated entirely out of the way of the great avenue of the Australian trade to India, it offers no inducement as a port of call, no encouragement to vessels to diverge from the beaten track. At a distance of about 800 miles from the Barrier Reefs, the place where most of the shipwrecks occur, it is almost useless as a port of refuge, as the Dutch settlement of Copang, on the

Island of Timor, may be reached by boats with equal facility, and their crews have a greater chance of procuring from thence conveyances to Singapore or elsewhere; the neglected settlement at Port Essington seldom offering opportunities of this nature. There can be no doubt that Port Essington is unrivalled as a harbour, being completely land-locked, and the soil is good, and well adapted for the growth of tropical produce; but experience has proved that these, although to be desired, are not the chief requirements for a colony of this kind. In all probability the soil near Cape York will be found equal in fertility, and land-locked harbours in this region of the globe have been found by experience to be very insalubrious, in-somuch that they are always, if possible, avoided by Europeans, and invariably by the natives; whereas, on the other hand, those places have been found to be most healthy which are situated in narrow straits, where the tides run rapidly, Now, if there is any part of the north coast where the tides flow with greater rapidity than another, it is about Cape York and in Endeavour Strait, through which, to the writer's knowledge, it runs at the rate of five or six miles an hour; and the country about Cape York is of a dry nature, free from swamps, and has at all times the advantage of the sea breezes, which must make it a very healthy position compared to Port Essington.

I shall conclude this letter by drawing your Lordship's attention to Mr. George Windsor Earl's* theory of the salubrity of settlements in the Indian Archipelago. There appears to be so much truth in his

* Enterprise in Tropical Australia, by G. Windsor Earl, page 92.

remarks, and they are so applicable to the present subject, that I cannot help quoting them at length.

"I will give the result of an inquiry into the subject, which at all events was carried on under peculiarly favorable circumstances, as far as regards the facilities that were presented for visiting the different places in the neighbouring seas that were remarkable for their salubrity or otherwise.

"Swamps and mudbanks, of which there are several in the immediate neighbourhood of the settlement, are generally assumed to be the chief sources of malaria in tropical countries, and this is probably the case; but that these alone are insufficient to give rise to the insalubrity that afflicts certain spots is evident, from the fact that Singapore, near the southern extremes of the Malay Peninsula, and Sourabaya, the capital of the eastern districts of Java, are very unfavourably situated in this respect, and are at the same time the most healthy of all the European settlements in the Indian Archipelago. The most populous part of the town of Singapore is absolutely erected upon a mangrove swamp, which extends for some distance inland, and when the tides are unusually high many of the streets are flooded, the water sometimes penetrating into the lower parts of the houses. The suburbs also are low, and for the most part saturated with rain during at least half the year, whilst the sea shore is fronted by extensive mudbanks, dry at low water. Yet fever is almost unknown there; and so generally healthy is the climate considered, that Singapore is a favorite resort for invalids from the neighbouring countries of Asia. Sourabaya, again, is entirely surrounded by mangrove and fresh water swamps, yet the settlement enjoys an almost perfect immunity from fever. Under ordinary circumstances, both these places should be perfect storehouses of disease. The only peculiarity in their position that tends to afford a clue to the mystery, consists in their being situated upon narrow straits, through which the tide flows with great rapidity.

"On the other hand the most unhealthy spots are the shores of the landlocked harbours; there are certainly not many such ports in the Indian Archipelago, but this very circumstance renders them the more valuable; and the European powers which possess territory in this part of the world have repeatedly attempted to avail themselves of the advantages which they present for the formation of naval arsenals. The inner harbour of Amboyna, the capital of the Moluccas, is, in every respect, a perfect port, as far as security and convenience for shipping is concerned, while the anchorage abreast of the town, which is situated on the shores of the outer harbour, is exceedingly unsafe—indeed it is only near the fort, where a rocky bank extends a little more than a cable's length from the shore, that an anchorage can be met with. This has induced repeated attempts on the part of the Dutch, during the last two centuries, to form arsenals on the shores of the inner harbour; but they were on each occasion obliged to desist, owing to the excessive mortality from fever that took place among the people employed.

"Strangers who visit the Indian Archipelago are often surprised to find that the land-locked harbours are neglected by the natives in favour of spots which present no palpable advantages. The chief commercial settlement on the island of Lomboek, which is resorted to by hundreds of ships, is situated upon an open roadstead, not only exposed to the westerly gales, but subject at all times to a rolling swell, which causes so dangerous a surf upon the beach, that communication with the shore is sometimes cut off for days together. Yet there is a land-locked harbour within the distance of a few miles, which affords perfectly secure anchorage, and is accessible to ships of the largest size; but here again the climate is so unhealthy, that its shores cannot be inhabited. The same rule applies to every spot similarly situated throughout the Indian Archipelago.

"What may be the causes of the insalubrity of these land-locked harbours can only be judged by inference, for malaria does not admit of analysis. That it is engendered by mangrove swamps and by mudbanks exposed at low water, I have not the least doubt; but, at the same time, the action of strong tides must tend to remove the impurities which create it, otherwise both Singapore and Sourabaya would be unhealthy. I have reason to believe also, that the effluvia produced by the action of a powerful sun on stagnant salt water, is highly unfavourable to the constitution.

"In taking under review the circumstances of the various settlements in these seas, it would appear that the most salubrious spots are those situated upon narrow straits; the banks of navigable rivers, above the reach of the salt water, hold the next rank. Open bays are by no means to be recommended, but land-locked harbours appear to be perfect repositories for all that can be injurious to the constitution.

"The repeated failures that have attended the efforts of Europeans to form settlements in this part of the world, afford support to the above view of the case. A secure harbour has always been a point of the first consideration, and although this can be often obtained in a strait, which at the same time would prove most convenient for merchant shipping, still the superior facilities for defence presented by a harbour with a single entrance, has proved too attractive to be overlooked. The English East India Company have twice attempted to establish themselves upon the Andaman Islands, in the Bay of Bengal, at Port Cornwallis, and at Port Chatham, but the settlements were in both cases abandoned, in consequence of the unhealthiness of the climate. More recently the Dutch made a similar effort, with the like result, at Triton Bay, on the south-west coast of New Guinea, another land-locked harbour. It is singular that in the last instance the settlement was about to be formed upon a narrow strait, near the spot which had been selected by the natives as the site for their principal village, but the intention was abandoned chiefly on account of the strength of the tides; indeed the natives of these countries appear to form the best selections of spots adapted for occupation, although as far as I could discover, even the more intelligent of the Indian Islanders had established no fixed rules, but were rather guided in their choice by instinct than by conclusions drawn from a course of rea-

soning. All the principal European settlements in the Archipelago were originally native towns, with the exception of Batavia, the capital of Java. The spot was selected on account of its being a favourable position for a fortress; and at a convenient distance from the native capital, which was situated some miles inland.

"The above remarks are, of course, only applicable to places on the sea coast, and even there other influences beyond those mentioned above are found to exist, especially in spots situated near the base of abrupt ranges of hills, where the deposit of decomposed vegetable matter is great. The Portuguese town of Dilli, on the north side of Timor, is rendered very unhealthy by its position upon a swampy plain of the richest alluvial soil, rank with tropical vegetation, while an amphitheatre of steep and high hills encloses it to landward, obstructing the course of the trade wind, and thus preventing a proper circulation of air."

I cannot close this letter without expressing an earnest hope, that the suggestions it contains may have your Lordship's serious consideration. If steam communication with Australia is all that is wanted to make the British Empire the most powerful, perfect, and lasting the world ever saw, it ought to be carried into immediate operation; and surely, my Lord, you will not hesitate to make this great scheme complete by carrying into execution the latter project, and lay the foundation of a city which, rising to opulence under the free institutions of England, would become a triumphal monument to the nations of the Indian Archipelago—of their release from the baneful thralldom of Dutch monopoly.

I have the honour to remain,
Your Lordship's most obedient
and humble Servant,
ADAM BOGUE.

Sydney, 8th January, 1848.

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